

The Ballarat Naturalist

May 2006



Trailing Goodenia
Goodenia lanata
(Club Logo)

PLANTS OF THE SEMI-ARID REGIONS Guest Speaker: Ern Perkins

Ern took us on a journey through many of the bushland blocks in the drier regions of north-west Victoria, south-west New South Wales and adjoining areas of South Australia. They included well known places such as Wyperfeld National Park but also many smaller State Parks, Regional Parks, Flora and Fauna Reserves, Bushland Reserves and Wildlife Reserves. Ern had visited these reserves in a conventional car so they are all easily accessible in good weather. Ern left a sheet of directions to many of these reserves – if you did want one please contact the secretary. So often we zoom up the highways and miss the treasures hidden in these reserves.

We saw slides of many of the plants which grow in these semi-arid places. Along the rivers and around swamps River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, Black Box *E. largiflorens* and Eumong *Acacia stenophylla* grow into large trees. Many of the reserves have remnants of mallee - Red Mallees *Eucalyptus calycogona* and *E. socialis*, Blue Mallee *E. polybractea*, Oil Mallee *E. oleosa* Yellow Mallee *E. incrassata* and White Mallee *E. gracilis* - growing in whipstick form in sandy soil. Interesting understorey plants include Leafless Ballart *Exocarpus aphylla*, Sweet Quandong *Santalum acuminatum*, Grey Mulga *Acacia brachybotrya* and Wiry Podolepis – a wiry plant with small white flowers contrasting with the robust podolepis found in box ironbark forest.

Salt tolerant plants such as glasswort, Salt Paperbark *Melaleuca halmaturorum*, saltbush and bluebush grow in salt affected areas. Other hardy shrubs were cattle bush, pittosporum and eremophila. After rain near Broken Hill Sturt Desert Pea was flowering brilliantly.

Some of the unusual plants we saw were Fleshy Mistletoe *Amyema miraculosa*, which is a parasite on other mistletoe (I hope we can find it in the Inglewood

Botanic Gardens during the club camp later in the year) and the spiny shrub Wait-a-while *Acacia collectoides* that grows near Robinvale.

We thank Ern for this interesting trip into the drier areas not too far from Ballarat and for sharing his botanical knowledge.

John Gregurke

EXCURSION: DAYLESFORD REGION.

For our excursion to the Daylesford we were fortunate to have as our leaders Joan Endacott assisted by Pat Murphy. Joan is a member of the Australian Plant Society, the Daylesford Historical Association and is active on conservation issues around Daylesford. One of her recent concerns was a proposal to allow housing development on Cornish Hill, a Crown Land Public Reserve, and our first stop for the day. This proposal will not now proceed. The reserve, which has an area of fifty acres, was the site for four gold mines in the late 1800s. These mines which mined quartz reef for gold were up to 1000ft. deep. Large areas of gorse and blackberries on the reserve will have to be cleared to allow native understorey plants to grow. Trees growing here included Narrow-leafed Peppermint, Manna gums, Blackwoods, Cherry Ballart and Silver Wattles on which a long leafed variety of Mistletoe was growing.

We stopped for a cuppa at a pleasant picnic spot through which a small stream was rippling.

Common Starwort *Callitriche stagnalis*, an attractive light green plant was growing in the water.

We travelled through Daylesford where autumn leaves were starting to colour the trees and north along the Midland Highway towards Castlemaine. We turned into Sawpit Gully road at Dry Diggings and stopped to look at the vegetation growing near the road. The Broad-leafed Peppermint and Scentbark were two trees noted. The lack of flowers on plants tested our identification skills. The Dwarf Bush-pea *Pultenea humilis*, Trailing Shaggy-pea *Podolobium procumbens*, Scented Bush-pea *Pultenea graveolens*, Thin-leaf Wattle *Acacia aculeatissima*, as well as *Hovea linearis* and *Tetratheca ciliata* were seen here.

Further along Sawpit Gully Road past Mount Franklin in the west we stopped at the Dry Diggings Bushland Reserve. Woolly, Rough, Varnish and Mitchell

Wattles were seen here. Also noted were Fairy Wax-flower *Philotheca verrucosa*, Common Rice-flower *Pimelea humilis*, and Handsome Flat-pea *Platylobium formosum* and Prickly Broom-heath *Monotoca scoparia*. Red Stringybark trees were growing here. Bird species were not very plentiful on the day but White-naped Honey-eaters and a Grey Fantail were seen here.

After travelling along Porcupine Ridge road we came to the Upper Loddon Flora Reserve where we had lunch at the Green Gully track. The prickly Spike Wattle *Acacia oxycedrus* and the orange flowered *Grevillea alpina* were seen here. A little bit farther along Porcupine Ridge road we saw the Upper Loddon *Grevillea oblecta*. This is one of the Holly-leaved Grevilleas. The dried remains of Milkmaids *Burchardia umbellata* and Greenhood orchid plants were identified here. Also noted were Long-leaved Box *Eucalyptus goniocalyx*, Bundled guinea-flower *Hibbertia fasciculata*, Heath Tea-tree *Leptospermum myrsinoides* and the Stiff Geebung *Persoonia rigida*. The fruit of Geebungs was eaten by aborigines.

Last stop for the day was near Limestone track. Golden Wattle *A. pycnantha*, Gold-dust Wattle *A. acinacea* and Hedge Wattle *A. paradoxa* were seen here. Also noticed were Twining Fringe-lily *Thysanotus patersonii*, *Dianella revoluta*, and *Wahlenbergia* sp. and dried up specimens of Button Everlastings *Helichrysum scorpioides* and *Thelymitra* Sun Orchids. Some members feel that a return visit in the Spring when most of the species seen would be flowering is warranted. A male Scarlet Robin and a White-eared Honey-eater were seen while we were having a cuppa before returning home after an interesting day.

Les Hanrahan.

Plant list for excursion on 9 April 2006 Pat Murphy

Sawpit Gully Road Plants:

<i>Acacia aspera</i>	Rough Wattle
<i>Acacia mitchellii</i>	Mitchell's Wattle
<i>Acacia verniciflua</i>	Varnish Wattle
<i>Cassinia arcuata</i>	Drooping Cassinia
<i>Epacris impressa</i>	Common Heath
<i>Eucalyptus dives</i>	Broad-leaved Peppermint
<i>Exocarpus cupressiformis</i>	Cherry Ballart
<i>Philotheca verrucosa</i>	Fairy Wax-flower
<i>Platylobium formosum</i>	Handsome Flat-pea
<i>Podolobium procumbens</i>	Trailing Shaggy-pea
<i>Pultenaea graveolens</i>	Scented Bush-pea
<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>	Grass Trigger-plant
<i>Tetratheca ciliata</i>	Pink Bells



Porcupine Ridge Road.

Upper Loddon Flora Reserve Plants:

Acacia acinacea

Acacia aspera

Acacia dealbata

Acacia lanigera

Acacia mitchellii

Acacia oxycedrus

Acacia paradoxa

Acrotriche serrulata

Bossiaea buxifolia

Brachyloma daphnoides

Burchardia umbellata

Cassinia arcuata

Daviesia leptophylla

Epacris impressa

Eucalyptus aff. aromaphloia

Eucalyptus dives

Eucalyptus goniocalyx

Eucalyptus macrorhyncha

Eucalyptus obliqua

Eucalyptus polyanthemus

Eucalyptus radiata subsp. radiata

Eucalyptus rubida

Eucalyptus viminalis subsp. viminalis

Exocarpos cupressiformis

Gompholobium huegelii

Grevillea alpina

Grevillea obtecta

Helichrysum scorpioides

Hibbertia fasciculata

Hovea heterophylla

Leptospermum myrsinoides

Lomandra fl. iformis

Monotoca scoparia

Persoonia rigida

Philothea verrucosa

Poa sieberiana

Podolobium procumbens

Pteridium esculentum

Pultenaea graveolens

Stylidium graminifolium

Tetratheca ciliata

Thelymitra sp.

Thysanotus patersonii

Wahlenbergia sp.

Gold-dust Wattle

Rough Wattle

Silver Wattle

Woolly Wattle

Mitchell's Wattle

Spike Wattle

Thorn Wattle

Honeypots

Matted Bossiaea

Daphne Heath

Milkmaids

Drooping Cassinia

Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea

Common Heath

Scentbark (Castlemaine)...rare

Broad-leaf Peppermint

Long-leaf Box

Red Stringybark

Messmate

Red Box

Narrow-leaf Peppermint

Candlebark

Manna Gum

Native Cherry

Common Wedge-pea (Karalla)

Downy Grevillea

Upper Loddon Grevillea

Curled Everlasting

Bundled Guinea Flower

Common Hovea

Heath Tea-tree

Wattle Mat-rush

Prickly Broom-heath

Stiff Geebung

Fairy Wax-flower

Fine-leaf Tussock Grass

Trailing Shaggy-pea

Austral Bracken

Scented Bush-pea

Grass Trigger-plant

Pink Bells

Sun Orchid

Twining Fringe Lily

Bluebell

FNC Ballarat
Minutes of General Meeting 7th April 2006

The President welcomed 28 members and visitors.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

John Gregurke: VCAT meeting to be heard in Ballarat on April 26, 10am Ballarat Magistrates Court re removal of vegetation for installation of sewage pipe at Ditchfield Lane. John and other objectors met with Central Highlands Water yesterday (6th April) on site; a meeting of objectors to be held tomorrow to plan for hearing.

Secretary has written a short letter for Dereel Action Group c/o Lorraine Carrenza.

Correspondence accepted: M: Del McDonnell S: Peter Billing

Reports

Treasurer's Report:

Opening Balance: \$3677.18	Closing balance: \$3986.68
Moved: Les Hanrahan	Seconded: Helen Burgess

General Business

Syllabus available for this year.

Call for guides for Ballarat Botanic Gardens – training course starting Tues May 2 at Robert Clarke Centre 10am, ring Joan Garner on 5332 6461.

20 members showed interest in a repeat visit to Little River Earth Sanctuary; date to be discussed at next committee meeting.

Helen Burgess gave details of 3D presentation available at Ballarat Observatory – enough interest shown to discuss this further.

Field Reports

Claire Dalman: at Paul's Wetland, Little Pied Cormorant seen for the last fortnight always perched on the same metal rail.

John Mildren: On Lake Wendouree, Wedgetailed Eagle being harassed by Masked Lapwings and Little Ravens over reeds at west end of lake.

Pat Murphy: in Doveton St South, a pear tree with ripe fruit was a food bonanza for more than 15 bird species.

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick: in Creswick, lots of small frogs with excellent camouflage.

Carol Hall: on Lake Wendouree, 120+ Freckled Duck between willow islands.

Syllabus Item: Ern Perkins to speak *on Plants of Semi-arid Regions*. He was thanked by Peter Dalman.

WOLLEMI PINES

The web site for the Wollemi Pine, <http://www.wollemipine.com/> states that “The Wollemi Pine is one of the world's oldest and rarest plants dating back to the time of the dinosaurs. With less than 100 adult trees known to exist in the wild, the Wollemi Pine is now the focus of extensive research to safeguard its survival.”

Lyndsay Fink provided the following background on this special tree.



Wollemi pine in pot plant

Wollemi nobilis

This is the last chapter in a group of trees left over from the dinosaur eras.

Bushwalker David Noble explored a gorge in the Wollemi Tourist Wilderness in 1994 and stumbled upon a group of trees. Later another group were found making 40 trees in all. Once there would have been forests.

The tree has bubbly bark and looks like a hive of bees has settled on it. The foliage is like that of the *Auricacas*. They are about 36 metres in height with slender columnar trunks. They have male and female cones on the one tree. The female cones are globular, about 10 cm round. Male cones are 15cm long. They have the characteristics of both the *Auricana* and *Agathis* (Kauris) and are thought to be the parent of both. They are named after the initial discoverer, hence, *Wollemi nobilis*.

Auricaria

There are two members of this family in Australia. There is one in New Guinea and one on Norfolk Island (*Araucaria excelsa*) which is probably the best known. There are however 13 on New Caledonia which was

part of Australia long ago. Most of these now grow on the Isle of Pines. The two in Australia are *Auricaria bidwillii* or Bunya Bunya Pine which has enormous cones. The aboriginal people used them for food. *Auricaria cunninghamii*, the Hoop pine, is the other one. This grows to 36 metres and is valuable as lumber.



Norfolk island Pine



Bunya Bunya

Agathis

There are twenty Agathis throughout the South Pacific area. All are tall trees with massive trunks. They have nearly spherical cones with criss crossed scale patterns. The cones are about the size of tennis balls. Of these twenty trees one grows in Australia, *Agathis robusta*, one in New Zealand, *Agathis australis* and one has recently been recorded in New Guinea. The wood from these trees is called Kauri after the Maori name for the tree.



Agathis robusta

The website says that the Wollemi Pine would make an ideal feature tree for large gardens, and parklands, but can also be maintained in pots. The ultimate survivor, the Wollemi Pine has proven to be hardy and versatile in cultivation. It is not only attractive and striking in appearance, it is easy to grow and low maintenance. It will adapt to a diverse range of climatic conditions, thriving in full sun to semi-shaded outdoor positions. It can be obtained locally at Bairds Garden and Home, 227 Grant Street (Cnr Barkly & Peel), Phone: 03 5331 7641

Lyndsay Fink



Wollemi Pine

CALENDAR

May

- Fri 5 Andy Arnold “Brush-tailed Phascogales—
 their life history and ecology”.
- Sun 7 Excursion: Bamganie Flora and Fauna Reserve led by Greg Binns
- Tues 23 Committee Meeting - Pat Murphy’s home at 7.30pm

June

- Fri 2 Phil Kinghorn “The geology of gold”
- Sun 4 Excursion—Geology led by Phil Kinghorn

Supper Duty:	May	Pat and Bill Murphy
	June	Helen Burgess
	July	

Committee

PresidentMr Peter Dalman
Vice-PresidentMr Greg Binns
SecretaryMrs Carol Hall
TreasurerMr Les Hanrahan

Miss Helen Burgess	Mrs Pat Murphy
Miss Maureen Christie.....	Mrs Claire Dalman.....
Mr John Gregurke	Mrs Alison Williams
Mr John Williams	

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email:

Website: www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au/displayclubs.asp Click on Environment and follow the lead.

Meetings are held at Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Ballarat Market Place (formerly Creswick Plaza) Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30am unless otherwise specified.